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ABSTRACT

The University of South Carolina added the Japanese specialization to its Master of International Business Studies (MIBS) program in 1982. The small group of students in the 3-year specialization are chosen competitively from a large applicant pool. While no Japanese language knowledge is required for entry to the program, many students have some experience with the language. By program completion, students have spent at least 3 years in intensive Japanese language study, including 1.5 years in Japan. The language program's five phases include: (1) an 8-week intensive summer training course; (2) two semesters of intensive international business courses and Japanese business language studies; (3) a second 8-week intensive summer program; (4) two semesters of study at a Japanese university; and (5) use and continued learning of business Japanese through a 6-to-7-month internship. Emphasis is on development of oral skills. The program is rigorous and demanding. The structure and assignments of the overseas internship vary according to the employer's needs, but tend to offer more generalized training than American internships. Companies evaluate the students at the end of the internships. The program has been very successful in establishing good relationships with companies and in placing graduates. (MSE)

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Introduction

Business between Japan and the United States has become the largest and most important bilateral economic relationship in the world economy. Japanese investments in the United States have been rapidly increasing, there are now over 6,000 Japanese corporations located in the United States. Americans are, in turn, making advances in the Japanese market.

Given these circumstances, there is a great need to educate business people who have a working knowledge of both cultures and languages, and who can interact effectively in conducting business between the two countries. In the United States especially, the need to educate bilingual and bicultural business executives is critical.

The University of South Carolina added the Japanese specialization to it's Master of International Business Studies (MIBS) program in 1982. The curriculum of the three-year Japanese specialization in MIBS requires intensive Japanese language training both in Japan and in the United States, and a six-to-seven month internship training at a company in Japan, all in addition to the completion of an intensive internationalized business program.

This paper, based on the author's experience as a language

instructor and internship promoter in Japan, briefly describes this unique interdisciplinary program which specializes in Japanese business. The paper also discusses the two characteristic features of the program: intensive Japanese language training and internship training in Japan.

The MIBS Program and its Japanese Specialization

The University of South Carolina (USC) began offering a two-year professional degree, the Master of International Business Studies (MIBS) program in 1974. It is an interdepartmental program, and faculty members from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Government and International Studies, Geography and the College of Business Administration jointly instruct the graduate students. In order to provide a complete training program for future managers of international business, it's rigorous curriculum focuses on four areas of development: 1) analytical and problem-solving ability in the international business environment; 2) foreign language proficiency; 3) cultural sensitivity and 4) overseas work experience. Students are required to complete an intensive business curriculum and to develop significant foreign language and area studies competencies.

In 1982, three-year specializations in Japanese and Arabic were added to the pre-existing two-year MIBS programs in German, Spanish, French, Portuguese and English (for foreign nationals). Two new language specializations, Korean and Italian, will be added to the program in 1989 and 1990 respectively.

Today, with more than 250 students and 900 alumni, MIBS is the largest graduate program in international business of any school accredited by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

MIB's Japanese track, however, maintains a relatively small size enrollment in order to provide more effective training to the students. Approximately 15 students with high GPA and GMAT scores, and some work experience, are selected from among a large number of applicants. Previous study of the Japanese language is not required, but normally more than half of the students have had some experience with Japanese, including some students who have lived in Japan.

Language Training - Business Japanese

Development of significant language competency is an essential part of the MIBS program. Due to the nature of Japanese culture and its language - being non Western and non Indo-European, students in the Japanese track are required to spend an especially substantial amount of their time and energy becoming proficient in the language. By the time the students complete the program they will have spent at least three years studying Japanese, including a year-and-a-half of study in Japan.

The basic structure of the Japanese language program in the MIBS program is as follows:

Phase 1. First 8 week Intensive Summer Training

Phase 2. Two semesters of intensive international business courses and Japanese business language studies

Phase 3. Second 8 week Intensive Summer Training

Phase 4. Two semester of study at a university in Japan

Phase 5. Actual utilization and continued learning of business Japanese through a 6-7 month internship

Prior to the first summer of intensive language training, the students are given a placement exam to determine at which level, beginning, intermediate or advanced, they will study. The enrollment in each section is kept small in order to provide effective instruction. Three instructors and four or five graduate assistants conduct these sections. All of the instructors and graduate assistants are experienced language instructors, and, they are all natives of Japan.

The students are trained in four basic skills of the language; the emphasis however is placed on the development of oral communication skills. Daily instruction also includes the study of the Japanese culture, society, and business, by means of films and video materials.

Each day, from Monday through Friday, students spend seven hours in the classroom. In addition, the students usually have at least five hours of home studies. The students are given a quiz every day in addition to mid-term exams and a final exam. The grading policy for the program is strict. Normally, one or two students fail the summer training with an unsatisfactory grade, and are asked to withdraw from the program.

During the fall and spring semesters, the main emphasis is placed on the study of business Japanese. The students study the vocabulary and expressions used in business settings, and also become familiar with the basic business environment in Japan. Throughout the study of business Japanese, the important points of Japanese business and customs, such as interpersonal relationships at work, decision-making, negotiation, etc. are discussed. For the advanced students, the study of Newspaper Japanese is also introduced, the students are assigned to read a few articles in the Japanese newspaper every week. It is reported by most of the students returning from Japan, that the business Japanese they studied during this phase was very useful to them during their internship training.

Because of the study of the intensive internationalized business curricula during the fall and spring semesters, the students do not have enough time for intensive language study. (An average of five to eight hours per night are spent for home studies of the business curriculum.) Therefore, three credit hours per week are devoted to language study. The MIBS students are often likened to the Japanese students who are preparing for a competitive entrance exam to a top university.

Before going to Japan, the students receive the second intensive summer training of the Japanese language. The structure of the second summer program is similar to that of the first summer except for the inclusion of the review of the business Japanese.

When the Japanese track students go to Japan they are currently being sent to the Japanese language program at either Waseda University or International Christian University in Tokyo, for their additional year of language study. All of the MIBS students are usually placed at either the advanced or the upper-intermediate level at these institutions. Advanced students have the added opportunity to attend lectures on Japanese business, economy, and history if they wish to do so.

Sometimes, the students are dissatisfied with the language program at these universities due to the fact that these programs tend to put more weight on the writing and reading of Japanese. Nonetheless the study at a Japanese university provides MIBS students with a beneficial experience in learning about Japan.

While attending the Japanese university, some students live in the company dormitory of their assigned internship company, while many others share apartments with Japanese university students. The students also begin to communicate in Japanese with the staff members of their assigned internship company. These living arrangements and the communication with the internship company help to enhance the student's study of the language to a great extent. Hence, students develop considerable competencies of the language during this phase.

By the time the students begin their internship at the company in Japan, they are able to communicate reasonably well in Japanese with the Japanese staff. The proficiency in technical and professional communication, however, is developed during the

internship training. The interns are normally required to read and write business documents and/or memoranda written in Japanese, and, very often, are asked to translate text into either English or Japanese.

The ultimate goal of the Japanese language training in the MIBS program is to train students to be able to function, not only in daily living communication in Japan, but also to be able to conduct business with their Japanese counterparts. This goal may seem ambitious, but, in fact, the majority of the graduates have attained this goal. The results of the oral proficiency exams given to the students upon returning from their assignments in Japan, and the internship evaluation completed by the internship supervisors in Japan, have indicated that the returnees' level of Japanese proficiency has reached the superior (ACTFL) level.

Internship Training in Japan

The internship training is an important and integral part of the student's training for a position in an international enterprise. It provides an opportunity to test the student's capability to apply the business and Japanese knowledge he has gained throughout the study in the program, and, to examine his ability to adapt effectively to a work situation at a company in Japan. Many sponsoring companies find the internship to be an excellent means of evaluating and recruiting the student for potential employment. Other companies consider an intern as a valuable resource in the internationalization of their operations, or as temporary support that may needed for a

specific project.

The six-to-seven-month internship is designed to included 'real work' experience, meaning that companies sponsoring an intern should utilize the student in day-to-day operations and/or on a project task force.

During the internship period, the students do not receive a salary due to the fact that the internship is a requirement of the MIBS degree and interns are enrolled, during that time, at the University of South Carolina. Rather, the internship companies are asked to make a predetermined donation to the University, of which the student receives 90% as a scholarship.

The placement of the student interns is arranged by the staff of the MIBS program, in particular the internship promotor, and it very often requires time-consuming effort. The initial internship discussion with a company usually takes place over a year before actual placement. Matching the interest and need of the company with those of the student is not an easy task; good 'nemawashi', grand work, is required. Also, the perception of and the accomodation for the internship often differs between Japanese companies and their American counterparts. Developing an internship opportunity at Japanese companies tends to be more difficult and more time consuming than at American companies.

Almost all the large Japanese companies have their own staff training programs. And, in regard to internships, some companies, especially manufacturing companies in the high tech field,

sponsor interns from developing countries, providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills. It is almost alien to most companies to sponsor interns in the field of business management.

It is a rather recent phenomenon that large Japanese corporations consider positively the sponsorship of internships to foreign students in their international operations. Accomodating foreign students with non-technical internships therefore depends upon the company. Companies like Sony, Hitachi and New Japan Securities have set up internship programs for foreign students, and positively sponsor the MIBS internship.

The situation, on the other hand, for American or European companies in Japan is different. More and more, foreign companies have been cracking into the lucrative markets of Japan, especially the banks and securities firms since the deregulation of Japan's financial markets. Many such companies suffer from an insufficient number of bilingual/bicultural staff with international business knowlege who are able to conduct business in Japan effectively. Under such circumstances, the MIBS students are more readily accepted as interns, and often receive job offers from the internship company after the completion of the program.

As was mentioned above, the structure of, and assignments for the internship vary depending upon the company. Japanese companies tend to provide students with more general training in a number of functional areas or departments, and have them assist in their international operations. Whereas American companies

tend to assign more specific projects to the students and utilize them to assist in their operations in Japan. Working as merely a bilingual assistant to the company is avoided as much as possible.

There are quite a few types of assignments that students have had as interns. Some of them have worked as market analysts, financial analysts, and import/export assistants.

In the first phase of the internship training, the students are typically asked to study the company, and to familiarize themselves with its structure, functions, personnel, etc. Students, especially at the Japanese company, are often treated as if they were hired into a specific department as a regular employee. Or, there have been cases when a student has allowed to participate in the company's new employee orientation, affording him a glimpse into how Japanese college graduates are indoctrinated into the corporation.

An example of one type of internship assignment is the experience of a student who had an internship at a foreign securities firm in Tokyo. He was involved in assignments in the four major divisions of the firm: Equities Research and Sales; Bond Sales and Trading; Swaps and Special Transactions; and Corporate Finance. The first two months were spent in the equities research and sales side. The intern's assignments included:

- the daily preparation and presentation of an international market news summary to the morning meeting of securities analysts and sales staff.

- the daily translation of Japanese newspaper articles for an international news service.

- preparation of the financial data for Swiss franc bond issues.

- report on the Nikkei 500 companies and their sectoral breakdowns by market capitalization.

- numerous client visits with the firm's securities analysts.

- study of the Japanese oil refining industry, culminating it's publication in weekly report on the deregulation of the industry.

Two students who had internships at a Japanese securities firm also, during their internships, took the Japanese brokerage exam and successfully received their Japanese Security Brokers license.

Toward the end of the internship, the sponsoring companies are asked to complete an internship evaluation of the students. All of the companies, up to the present, have indicated that the internship experience was very beneficial to them, and most of them have shown an interest in continuing to sponsor the MIBS internship.

In the same way, the students who have completed the internship have reported that their experience in Japan was an invaluable contribution toward their future career.

Upon returning to the University of South Carolina after the internship, some students have already accepted a job offer from their internship company, while most of the other students are in the final stages of deciding their job placement. The MIBS Japanese track graduates have had great success in obtaining employment which enables them to utilize their acquired skills

and experiences. In fact, the majority of the graduates are now working for Japanese companies in the U.S., or for American companies in Japan.

Conclusion

It has been only six years since the Japanese specialization was added to the MIBS program at the University of South Carolina, nevertheless the program has been quite successful and continues to evolve. Similar programs have been established at other institutions in recent years, however, the Japanese track of the MIBS program remains unique with it's intensive Japanese language and business Japanese training, intensive internationalized business program, and the internship training in Japan.

In the current economic and business situation which exists between Japan and the United States, international business programs like the Japanese track of the MIBS program are becoming more important, and the need to educate students who can interact effectively in their future work between the two countries is rapidly increasing. Consequently, the job offers from Japanese companies in the United States, and American companies in Japan are on the rise. Almost all of the graduates of the program are engaged in business between Japan and the United States. Their bilingual knowledge and expertise in international business both here and abroad have been reported to be very useful in leading to their success in business.

Due to it's intensive nature, program is considered to be a challenge for students to successfully complete. Also, due to the fact that the Japanese track in MIBS is a three year program, a year-and-a-half of which is spent in Japan, getting the MIBS degree in the Japanese specialization can be described as an investment both physically and spiritually. Nonetheless, it is not an exaggeration to state that the study of this program can provide one of the most effective and productive ways of becoming international businessmen who can competently conduct business between Japan and the United States.

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